

RICHARD HENRY MATHER

John Cowen Whiting
9/9 Palisades

Beau

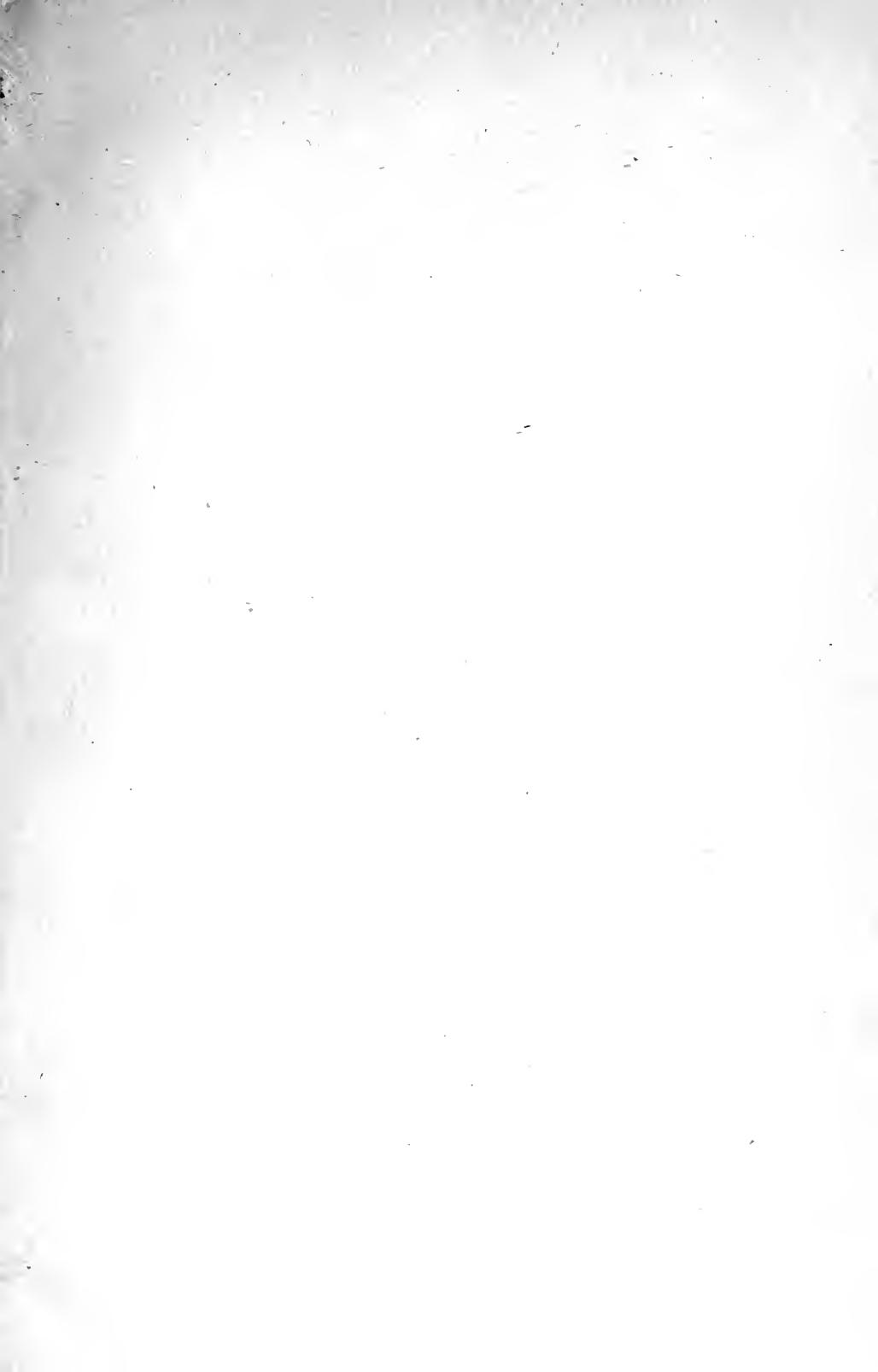
PRESENTED

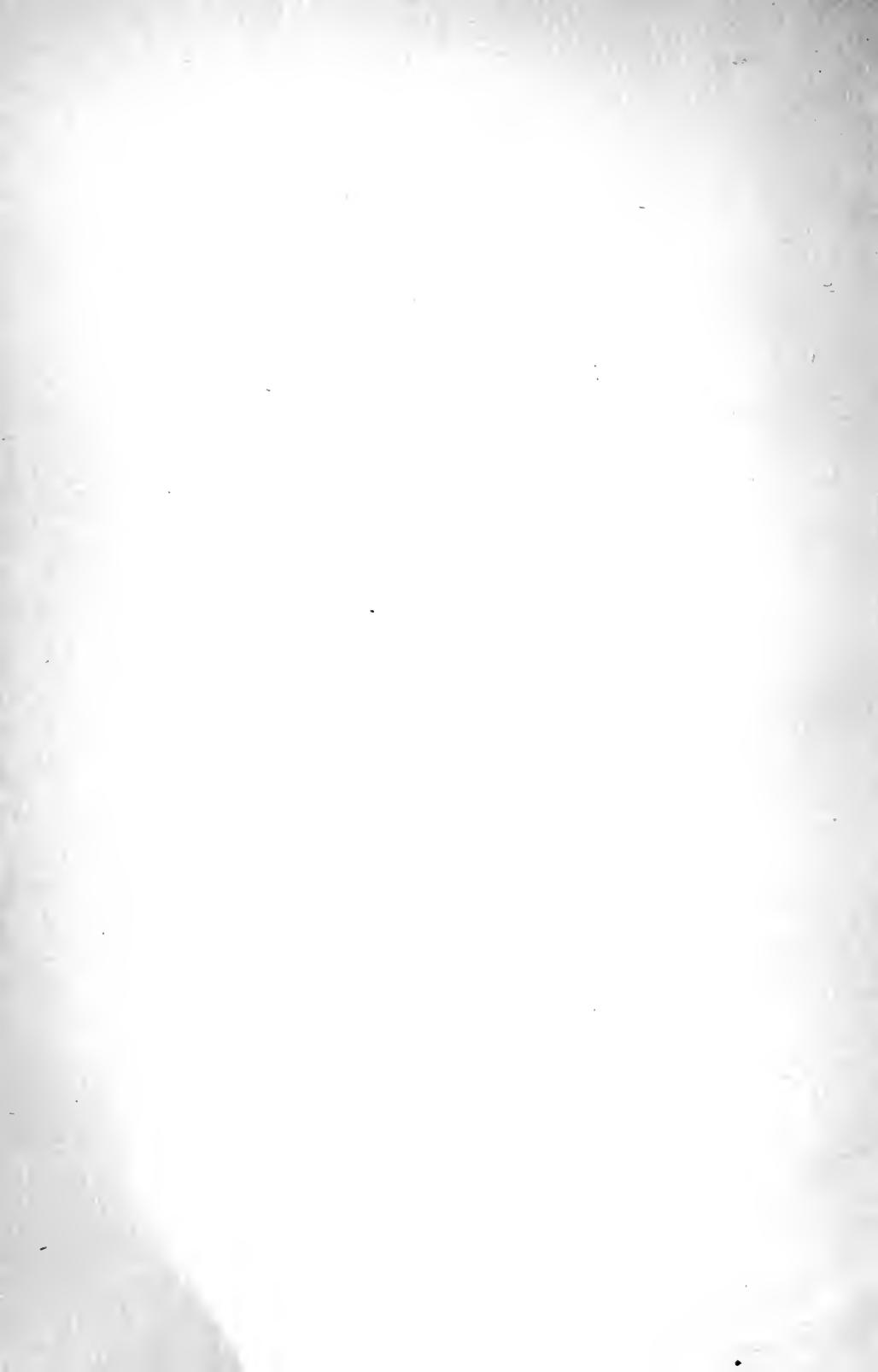
TO

THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

BY

The Hon. Wm Whiting





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

<http://www.archive.org/details/addresscommemora00frinuoft>



R. N. Martin

Educat. B
M

AN ADDRESS

COMMEMORATIVE OF

RICHARD HENRY MATHER,

Professor of Greek in Amherst College.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE FACULTY, STUDENTS, AND
FRIENDS OF THE COLLEGE,

June 15th, 1890,

BY PROFESSOR HENRY ALLYN FRINK.

AMHERST MASS, 1890.

12391
231191
e0

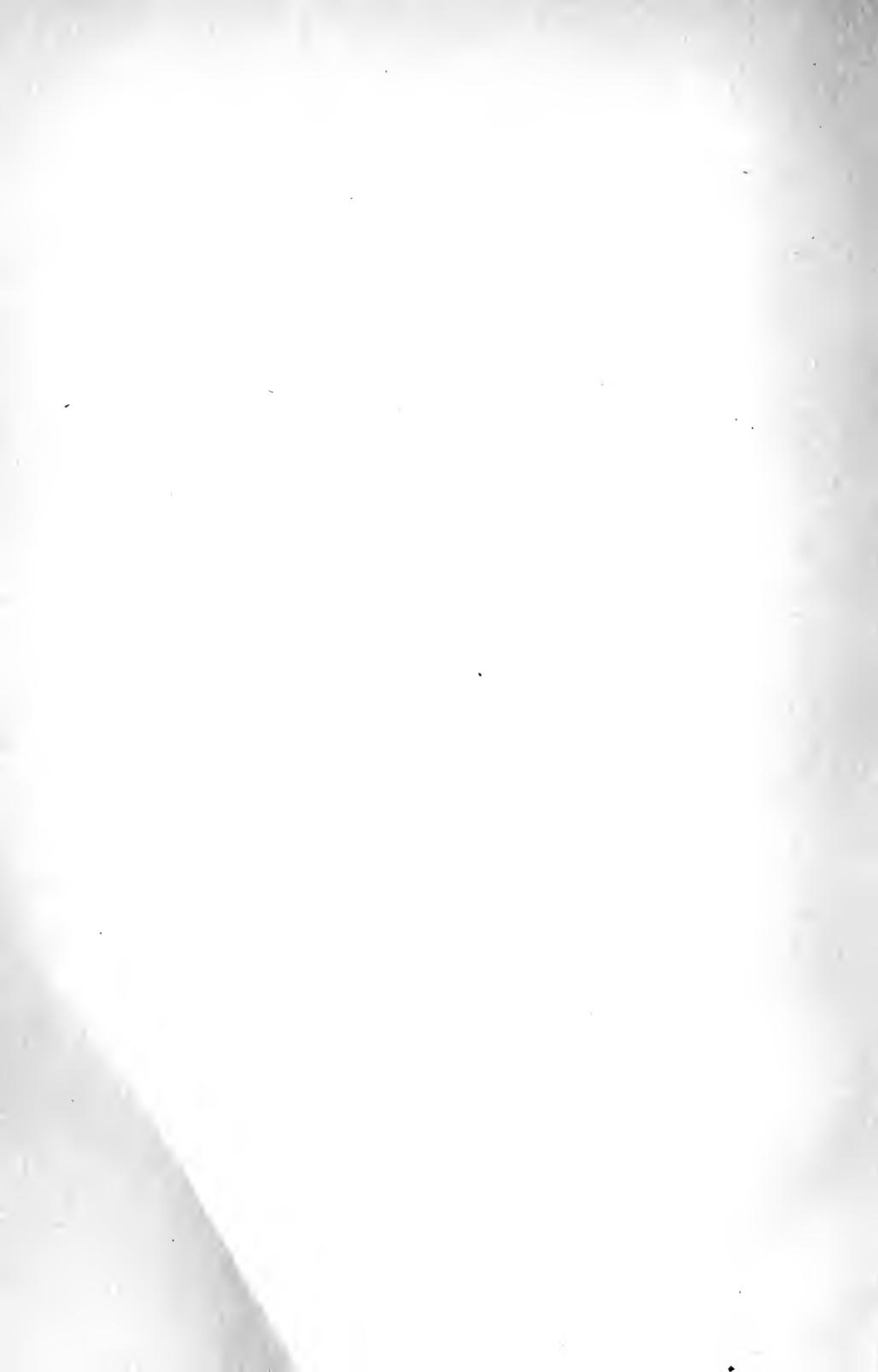
GRIFFITH, AXTELL & CADY COMPANY, PRINTERS,
HOLYOKE, MASS.

THE ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF AMHERST COLLEGE

ARE PROVIDED WITH THIS ADDRESS BY

THE HON. WILLIAM WHITING, A. M.,

A LONG-TIME FRIEND OF PROFESSOR MATHER.



I

*A*LIFE many-sided, rich in endowment, and of large usefulness has gone from us. Devoted to Amherst College with rare consecration, for more than thirty years, no one voice can tell of the reach of its influence. So in what will be heard to-day, many voices will mingle. Would that their words could be repeated in full. But since this cannot be, the words that are spoken will aim to echo the spirit of the many who have gratefully testified of Professor Mather's earnest life and work.

Our first thought of Professor Mather is that his was a singularly favored life. Its end was pathetic, almost tragic. But until its closing months, a kind fortune, as we ordinarily count fortune, waited upon it generously and constantly. This fortune began with an honored lineage. Piety, patriotism, learning, power of mind and gift of leadership, as marked as this country has known, distinguish his ancestry.

His name he traced to Richard Mather of Lancashire, England, who in 1635 came to

America, and settled as a preacher at Dorchester, Mass. From his second son Timothy, Professor Mather was descended. This Timothy was the brother of Increase Mather, sixth president of Harvard College, whose degree of Doctor of Divinity was the first granted in this country; and the uncle of Cotton Mather, even more illustrious than his father, Increase, as author, patriot, and divine. Richard, a son of Timothy, settled at Lyme, Connecticut; and Henry, his descendant of the fourth generation, was father of Professor Mather. On the maternal side a not distant ancestor was Jonathan Edwards, the theologian and metaphysician,—“One of the three original minds that America has produced.” Through his mother’s father, he was also descended from the Rev. John Whiting, a colleague of the Rev. Mr. Stone an early pastor of the First Church in Hartford, Connecticut; and from Captain John Mason, the successful commander in the Pequot War, major of the colonial forces for many years, and from 1660 to 1670 Deputy Governor of Connecticut.

When a young man the father of Professor Mather, following an elder brother, Richard, emigrated, as it would then be said, from Lyme, Connecticut, to Binghamton, New York. Here, later, Henry Mather married Frances Whiting, a

great-granddaughter of Jonathan Edwards; and here, February 12, 1834, was born Richard Henry Mather.

If New England was not his birth-place, its spirit was embodied in the home of his boyhood. To know what was the influence of that home upon the child is to recall what was most ennobling in the man. At fourteen Richard Mather came to Amherst to be under the intellectual guidance of his uncle, Professor William S. Tyler. For this guardian of his youth and companion of his early and later manhood, Professor Mather had, as his mother writes, "the admiration of a pupil combined with the love of a son and the sympathy of a life-long friend.

A little later, he was for a term at the Hopkins Academy, Hadley, Mass., then having for its Principal the present Lecturer on Natural Philosophy in Amherst College, Dr. Marshall Henshaw. From here, to complete his preparation for college, he went to Williston Seminary, Easthampton. "He was then," as a classmate, President Northrup of the University of Minnesota, tells us, "what he has always been, a genial, hearty, and friendly man; an earnest and excellent scholar; an eloquent speaker." Especially was President Northrup impressed with his classmate's proficiency in Greek, "as he had then the

habit of leaving his room and coming out into the hall of the dormitory, and there rolling off the smooth-flowing lines of Homer with almost lightning rapidity. I have since heard him preach in English, and very few men could surpass him in preaching; but no English preaching could ever impress me as did his *appropriation*,—I may call it, rather than mastery, of the Greek tongue.” To President Northrup’s early impressions of this student of Greek is to be added Professor Tyler’s statement, “that in all the classes that he has taught, Professor Mather had no equal in facility and felicity of translation.” Nor can the silence of his “silver tongue” to-day make us forget the charm and power with which he was wont to reproduce the stately march and magnificent sweep and swell of Greek verse, in his public and private readings from the tragic poets.

Graduated from Williston Seminary in 1852 with the honor of Salutatory oration, he entered Amherst College with the class of 1856. In this class he was prominent as a scholar and writer; and Sophomore year, as a Kellogg Prize speaker. Junior year he left the class of 1856 for foreign travel. With Professor Tyler, Mr. Edward A. Strong, now of the Board of Trustees of Amherst College, and Mr. George Washburn, for many years President of Robert College, Constantino-

ple, he went over the usual route of the tourist in Europe, with a visit to Egypt, Palestine, Turkey, and Greece. A part of the time the Rev. Samuel Fiske, then known as "Dunn Browne," was a companion. In Mr. Fiske's sketches of his travels, entitled "Dunn Browne Abroad," we catch now and then a characteristic glimpse of Professor Mather as a youthful traveller. The glimpse is always of one brightening the way, and making hard places seem easy and smooth. So it was through the whole journey of life. To all whom he met and to all with whom he lived and labored, he was as the light that gladdens, and as a breeze that invigorates.

His early visit to Greece was an epoch in his life. His impressionable, responsive nature was here touched with a power as lasting as, at the time, irresistible. However unconscious the purpose, sympathies were quickened that had for their blossom and fruit the giving of all his future years to the study of Greek life, art, and literature. In this opportunity for an enthusiastic devotion to an early inspiration, we see more than a favored life. It is something that approaches an ideal life. It is the "vision splendid" of the youth, not fading, as is so often the sad experience, "into the light of common day;" but in all the years that follow, steadily rounding

into larger, finer proportions, and gaining a richer beauty and glory.

On his return to Amherst, he joined the class of 1857, and was graduated with its highest honor. The subject of his oration was the keynote of the theme about which he was to write and speak for a lifetime, "Athenian Culture." His previous record as a scholar, his brilliant powers, and his year of travel with its advantages, made this honor probable from the first. To the members of the class with the same ambition, and their friends, his entering the lists was naturally a disappointment. How he bore himself in this ordeal we learn from a classmate, the Rev. Dr. Frisbie of Des Moines, Iowa. "As I recall those days, I am impressed by the genuineness of the manhood he then showed. He did not allow it to be thought that he had taken a place with us that he might get the advantage of any one of us. He did not keep himself apart. He did not act as though his was a position to be *defended*. He was at once a member of the class in frank, friendly heartiness. It was *his* class from the day that he entered it. His course was such as to allay the first sense of disturbance, and to make for himself a sure and warm place in the hearts of his classmates."

The year after graduation found him a teacher

at Williston Seminary with an experience brightly prophesying his future success. He was always interested in Williston Seminary, and an election to its Board of Trustees in 1880 was very grateful to him. To the earnest sense of duty that attended him in every place of responsibility, he added here the warm love of a son.

Another year abroad, given mainly to the study of Philology at Berlin, and he returned to make Amherst, where he had passed so much of his youth, his home for life.* And how he loved Amherst. Her beauty was his delight and praise. With each returning year he would say, "that he felt like thanking God that he was permitted to see the spring come again in Amherst,—it was so beautiful." And if this joy in the beautiful was his birthright, was not his a favored life in having two such homes as Amherst and Binghamton to give his æsthetic sense the kindest and most generous culture? The hills that surround his birthplace except where the Chenango and Susquehanna come and go, if not

* Before going abroad Professor Mather married, May 26, 1858, Lizzie, daughter of Daniel Carmichael of Geneva, N. Y. The children of this marriage are Alice, the wife of Professor Williston Walker, Ph. D., of Hartford Theological Seminary; Professor William T. Mather of Williston Seminary, and Edward Mather of Boston. Mrs. Lizzie Mather died October, 1877. March 31, 1881, Professor Mather married Ellen A., daughter of Samuel H. Mather, LL. D., of Cleveland, O. Mrs. Mather survives him, also a young daughter, Eleanor.

so famous as those upon which we look, are yet in their way hardly less beautiful. Sunsets no less brilliant than ours enrich its sky; and upon its hills at the East often rests the same purple light that at times tints the Pelham range. With the two rivers meeting in its centre, its beauty, if not so cultivated and suggesting so much an English landscape as the scene before us, is more varied and picturesque. But Professor Mather in his comparison always gave the crown to Amherst. Nor was this whole region without a large measure of his admiration and love. In his rare fund of delightful sayings, he had none that he seemed to enjoy repeating more than the remark of a kind lady who, having early recollections of this part of New England, said to him when a boy leaving Binghamton for Amherst: "Give my love to the Connecticut Valley, all the way up."

Here in Amherst College, he began in 1859 the work that he laid down only with his life. Of his thirty-one years as a teacher of Greek, three were as instructor, six as adjunct professor, and twenty-two as professor. He was also an enthusiastic and successful teacher of German from 1864 to 1879, when he opened a new and most valuable field of culture at Amherst College as "Lecturer upon Sculpture."

For a few months in 1862 he pursued studies at Andover, Mass., especially theology with Professor Park. In the following year he was licensed to preach; and from that time until his last sermon in the Eliot church at Newton, a year ago next September, he was the larger part of the year supplying churches in New England and New York. In preaching- not only was his mind stimulated and broadened, his social nature given friendly culture, and his religious spirit a larger activity; but his gifts as an orator were put to their highest use. Because of the power of these gifts, the wish has often been expressed that he might have given himself wholly to the ministry. The invitations to do so were alluring. Some of these calls received respectful consideration; but his heart was here in the college, and here he remained. In 1879 Bowdoin College conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. But admired as he never failed to be in the pulpit, he was always known by the title which indicated his life work—Professor Mather. So mentioned and remembered, the college shared in the impression always pleasant and often marked that he left with his congregation.

But Professor Mather's gifts were not simply those of the scholar and public speaker. Often

were his friends made to forget the successful teacher and preacher in admiration of the man of affairs. This sense of practical power asserted itself soon after graduation. But with a momentary inclination toward business life ended all swerving from the purpose to be a teacher of Greek. With every other gift, he placed his executive force and skill at the disposal of the college. Many and valuable were his services, as in the remodelling of the library building, the endowment of scholarships, and in meeting extra expenses of his department. How helpful was his executive power when turned in a single direction, need not be told to one familiar with the collection in yonder Art Gallery, which, hereafter, whatever may be the official title, will always and justly be known as *The Mather Collection*.

It was with the plan of this Art Gallery before him that in 1873 he again went abroad. How vividly as we have known him in other undertakings, is he portrayed in the following description by a fellow traveller* of that summer! "Every new day and every new city suggested the same question,—what can be done now and here for the Art Gallery? It was a rare day that something was not accomplished; and only those

* The Rev. Robert M. Woods, Hatfield, Mass.

who know what Professor Mather's enthusiasm and executive ability were, can understand how rapidly and smoothly that Art Gallery which was in Professor Mather's mind took on reality." A few years ago the collection of Casts in this Gallery was, apart from the one in Boston, the finest in the country. If to-day it is also more than equalled by the one in New York and the one at Smith College, the reason is found in lack of space in Williston Hall for a larger collection. And when grateful hearts and hands shall honor the memory of Professor Mather's work for the College, what more fitting form can the monument assume than a building and a fund that shall keep Amherst's Art Collection in the rank where he first placed it and held it for so many years?

After twenty-eight years of continuous service, came his first long vacation in the form of a year's absence from college duties. Mrs. Mather accompanying him, he repeated the tour of his student days with the exception of Egypt and Palestine and the addition of Holland and Sicily. But the main purpose of this vacation was one of study and investigation in Greece. Residing here several months, he gathered the material not only for extending former courses and the preparation of a new course in Greek Art;

but, for making even more richly stimulating and fruitful all the work of the department.

Again at his post in September, 1888, his labors were carried on for more than a year with an ardor and energy full of splendid promise for what he hoped to be a new era in his teaching. But sadly familiar is all that follows: the thwarting of that promise by the hand of disease; the perilous and painful operation; the brave spirit that met it and from it apparently rallied; the relapse; and the weary months of illness in which he fought his disease with a courage that, as a classmate who had himself stood in battle, writes, "was equal to a Gettysburg or a Wilderness." As the struggle continued through the long winter, the wish grew with the days to live to look upon another of Amherst's beautiful springs, and to see President Seelye again. But the beauty of the spring tarried longer in its coming than he in his going; and the night that President Seelye came, he went.

In several of the letters received since he went from us we read: "I cannot think of Professor Mather as dead, nor of Amherst College without him." Nor need we so think. That in Professor Mather which we most loved is not dead, nor can it die. Neither can he be sep-

arated from the college. He made his life one with her life; and in the constant power and influence of this Christian College he has an earthly immortality.

II

*A*S a teacher of Greek, Professor Mather believed with Matthew Arnold that “the aorist was made for man, not man for the aorist.” No mere word scholar, he observed the distinction between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power, pointed out by De Quincey who says: “*All* the steps of knowledge, from first to last, carry you further on the same plane, but could never raise you one foot above your ancient level of earth; whereas, the very *first* step in power is a flight—is an ascending movement into another element.” And so to come into Professor Mather’s class was an intellectual awakening. Imbued with the spirit of the authors taught, he entered into the life of the tragedy, the poem, the oration, and revealed the heart and soul of Greek literature. Not that he failed to impart knowledge, and knowledge of the most scholarly type; but the special aim of his teaching was, as De Quincey would say, power. Work, hard work and much

of it, was required of the student. But never was the work put upon that low level of instruction which seeks to give value to learning by making it unnecessarily difficult and distasteful. He so invested the subject with the charm of his literary and æsthetic spirit as to make [the hard work to all appreciative minds, a delight. Inspiring the student with his own enthusiasm, the task became as the joyful load which the hunter brings back from the successful chase.

Upon the class of the term he concentrated his thought and effort. If for the time he seemed to make it his college world, it was for the advantage of the class; and all in turn shared the same devotion. He measured with a skill and accuracy almost intuitive the capacity and aim of every member of the class. He was swift to detect indifference and indolence. His favorite theme, as a preacher, was formation of character. No less was this his text as a teacher. To be idle or careless meant more than a temporary failure in Greek. It was leaving as he thought, a weak place at the foundations of manhood. No student of his would he permit to do this without his word of remonstrance. True, that word perhaps at times was sharper and stronger than the student may have thought his negligence deserved. Yet it

needed only the first indication of better things, to gain even more largely his instructor's approval and encouragement.

The teacher's one immediate reward is the student's good work. No man ever rejoiced more than Professor Mather in this reward. A frequent remark when speaking of some of his best classes was: "I would willingly teach a class like that, year in and year out, for no other compensation than the pleasure of it." Tired with other work he would say: "I am going to hear such a class and get rested." And if the recitation proved as he anticipated, he would return from it bright and fresh as from a ride in the country.

At the last meeting of the New England Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools, he was asked to take part in a discussion of the question: Should Homer be taught in the Preparatory School?" Words dictated in his illness in answer to this request, give us his ripest views as a teacher of the Greek language and literature. "Though there have been important changes in recent years, yet Greek is still studied in the preparatory schools more for its orthographical forms than for its literature. After the forms have been so far mastered as to permit, let facility and elegance of translation be insisted on rather than

microscopic dissection of the words. This may seem heresy to some ; but it is the result of long experience and much reflection. What is called the Dr. Taylor method of teaching I do not believe in. I was trained in it most thoroughly, and for years, as a teacher, tried to follow it with faith ; but it was in vain. I am sure it was not the best way. It seems to me vastly more important that the academy boy should have unfolded to him the grandeur, the pictorial beauty, and the exquisite word-painting of Homer than that he should know all about the dialect and have every enclitic at his tongue's end. It is desirable to know both, but the first is the more so. * * And my impression is that in all but the most advanced work in Greek, we should study it for its literature rather than as a branch of philology. A very small proportion of the graduates from our High Schools, our Academies, and our Colleges ever become professional scholars ; most of them have to devote their lives to getting a living, and if we use up the limited time allotted to this matchless literature in examining it page by page and line by line with a microscope, we not only cause a distaste for the work, but give the students so little of that which is admirable that they emerge with such a modicum of culture and knowledge that they do not appreciate the loss of the one, and are glad to forget the other."

In this article he tells of his own method of teaching the *Odyssey*; of the time ordinarily given to forms and grammar used in putting the Greek into the best English, and in "trying to ascertain why the poems of Homer are so much admired;" of the marking out of collateral reading from Matthew Arnold, Symonds, and other English writers on Greek literature; of the study of the geography descriptive and physical, "of certain matters in archaeology, especially everything connected with art as evinced in Homer;" of his own reading to the class of "striking scenes" outside of their lessons; of a formal debate on the Homeric question, and the arousing of interest in "defending the authorship of the poems."

In a public tribute, a recent graduate has told how the time of one recitation was given to the reading of slang translations, as prepared by members of the class in Aristophanes; and he adds, "I venture to say we caught more of the spirit of Attic comedy, in that one hour, than we could have in weeks construing into the unnatural English sometimes insisted on." St. Augustine said of teaching, "a golden key which does not fit is useless, a wooden key which does is everything." So Professor Mather evidently thought.

Broad himself in his many sympathies, he had

an especial dread of narrowness. He felt that the tendency of the age was too well typified in one who, as Frederic Robertson tells us, could see nothing of interest in a great Cathedral town, except the doors of the houses, because the father, who had been a builder, had taught the child to observe only such work. To Professor Mather's desire to provide an influence that should help counteract the selfish intensity and narrow absorption of business and professional life, we owe largely his lectures on art. In their preparation he recognized that, as a rule, lecturing and teaching are not the same processes. The lecturer has to do with the class; the teacher, with the individual. The lecturer contributes information; the teacher stimulates and trains the mind. So that whatever may be the place of the lecturer in the university, the great work of the college is to be done by the teacher. Therefore, his lectures on art, as on German history and literature, are more of the popular type by which we are taught than of the scholastic form from which we may simply learn something. In what he had to say there was much of value purely as instruction. But all this would have been in vain, if pure and ennobling sympathies had not been awakened to guard the soul against evil passions and sordid influences. To make young men in-

telligent about art, its principles and achievements, was but a means to an end. And that end was to quicken a sense of the beautiful, to call into life and joyful vigor emotions, tastes, aspirations, that would help to refine, purify, sweeten, and broaden all the years to come.

Well has it been said that "contact with an inspiring and magnetic teacher is one of the chief goods which Heaven bestows upon us in the spring-time of life." How great then is the debt of Amherst College to a teacher so enthusiastic and invigorating as was Professor Mather for more than thirty years !

Nor is the debt now unrecognized. Alumni of all periods, not a few from places of high influence, send such acknowledgments as are found in the eloquent words of Professor Adams of Johns Hopkins University:—"Professor Mather will always be remembered by his students as an enthusiastic apostle of Greek thought. He taught not the mere technique of language or of art, but rather the appreciation of noble ideals of freedom, beauty, truth, justice, honor, and manhood,—ideals at once Greek and Christian. For him the first sunlight from the East which touched the uplifted spear of Athenae Promachos was the sunshine of righteousness. Graduates of Amherst College who once read with him the

story of those old wars with Persia, and who heard his splendid English version of the Greek dramatists of that second heroic age, will never forget the glorified vision of Greek liberty dawning upon Athens, and, from Athens and Florence, upon the Western world. The classical student whose range hitherto had been limited to parsing and scanning, was taught to discover a wider intellectual horizon and to perceive the true relation of Greek liberty to modern life. Professor Mather saw, as clearly as did the great poets and teachers before him, that the struggle for freedom and truth and justice in the world is by no means ended; that the children of light must continue their conflict with material forces and against numerical odds as did the Greeks of old. But he rejoiced in things won and done. Like the runner who brought good news to Athens of victory at Marathon, Professor Mather was a herald of preliminary battle already fought by classical scholars in America. He shared the fight; he brought the tidings; and like Pheidippides, that hero whose image in relief now stands in the Art Gallery at Amherst, this messenger of Greek liberty and Greek culture gave up his life before his story was fairly told. Upon the acropolis of Amherst College the Art Idea of Professor Mather will survive and be his living monument.

“So is Pheidippides happy forever,—the noble strong man
Who could race like a God, bear the face of a God, whom
a God loved so well.

He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was
suffered to tell

Such tidings, yet never decline, but gloriously as he began
So to end gloriously—once to shout, thereafter be mute :
‘Athens is saved !’ Pheidippides dies in the shout for his
meed.”

III

UNDIVIDED as was Professor Mather in his loyalty to teaching, yet the world at large mourns him to-day as a preacher. Nor as we have seen without cause. Says one whose opinion is authoritative: "It is hard to think of a vacant pulpit in his own denomination so prominent that he would not have been thought worthy of it could he have been obtained." Not analytic or speculative, with no attempt to be profound or exhaustive, avoiding all subtleties and abstractions, he presented simple, accepted truths with perfect clearness and winning force. Never dull for a moment, but in treatment of theme fresh, vigorous, and picturesque, he caught the attention with the opening sentence and held it to the last. If his style was finely wrought, the appearance of art was lost in its ease and grace. Nor was the sermon without some practical end in view. A message for the day and hour, it was sent home to the heart and life with a directness and an earnestness always

forcible, and often highly eloquent. Without the depth of suggestion, the height of inspiration, and range of comprehensiveness, which some demand, his preaching had perhaps, because of these deficiencies, a wider usefulness and more popular power.

He had the physical basis and the temperament of the orator. Writes one* who knew him well, "Tides of feeling rolled over him naturally when he came to write or speak." To this emotional force were added a voice clear, flexible, expressive, an action peculiarly animated and graceful, and a delivery spirited and magnetic. Yet the secret of his power as a preacher lies deeper than in these things. "Behind the orator," says Emerson, "is the man;" and so behind the preacher is the Christian. Of godly ancestry and training, at eight years of age a Christian by conscious purpose, four years later making public profession of that purpose, his religious life was from first to last wholly natural. When he came to the critical moment of his illness, and was to face an operation the issue of which the most distinguished surgical skill could not foresee, he asked first to engage in prayer. And what a prayer it was! Not of nervous apprehension, not a plea for life; but the simple, natural expression of a man accustomed to talk with God

*The Rev. James G. Vose, D. D., Providence, R. I.

in all that concerned his ways. With voice calm and clear and manner perfectly composed, he gave thanks for the skill that could relieve pain; asked a blessing upon those who were to exercise that skill; and closed with only a minor petition for himself. When men come to such places, and unconsciously reveal a faith so childlike, we know that there has been nothing assumed or formal in their walk with God.

In the last sermon which he preached, speaking of Christian character he says: "If we have it all ready for the emergencies of life, it will be because we have accumulated it before." Little did he think how noble an illustration of this truth he was so soon to give. The first sermon that I heard Professor Mather preach was when I was preparing for College. In the sermon he told of the peace that is found in Christ, especially in the struggles of life. The sermon has never been forgotten; surely not as I stood by his open grave. Yet the thought on that April afternoon, was not so much of the unbroken peace now to be forever his; as of the gentleness and serenity of spirit with which in the months of his bitter conflict, he had emphasized every word of the sermon, preached with such earnestness, years before.

"Ah, how shall I speak of Professor Mather as a

Christian?" says the friend* who from college days, next to his own family, had known him in the closest intimacy. "The sweetest and best note of all was struck here. In no way, in my judgment was his influence more continuous and healthful. He was an apostle of a cheerful Christianity. His very presence dissipated all the vapors of a morbid self-consciousness. It was like a west wind from the Delectable mountains —a tonic for all souls depressed by the shadows of an introspective habit. He believed God, took him at his word, accepted his promises implicitly,—rested upon them. None had a clearer conception of the Fatherhood of God, made known through the Brotherhood of the Son of Man. I doubt if his spiritual horizon was often clouded. It was because of this clear view of an established and unchangeable relation, that he could with such calm and sweet and wonderful resignation, lay down all hopes, all plans, his consciousness of well-equipped powers of usefulness at their highest point—all without a murmur or scarce a sigh at that Father's call; call to so many of us less clear-sighted, less trustful, how mysterious, how untimely!

His own words, spoken late in his illness to his pastor, when asked to send some message to the

*Mr. Edward A. Strong, Trustee of Amherst College.

meeting on the Day of Prayer for Colleges are known to many of you ; but we shall all be the better for hearing them again. "If I were to say anything to the students, it would be this—indeed I would like to say this—that the Christian life for me has been an endeavor to follow after righteousness, not in my own strength but in that of my Heavenly Father. I am very conscious of weakness, failure, and sin, but I accept forgiveness through Christ who is also my example and inspiration."

IV

A MORE direct study of Professor Mather's characteristics turns our thought first to the strength of his physical resources. Behind that cheery presence and sunny, inspiring nature was, for almost a lifetime, unbroken good health. The work that would have soon crushed an ordinary constitution, his splendid vitality and great natural powers of endurance permitted him to do with enjoyment. Six days of the week often doing double service in helping some colleague, teaching art as well as Greek, lecturing in neighboring villages, editing books, preparing sermons and lectures; the seventh day found him, most of the time, at some wearisome distance preaching with a freshness and a vigor only to be expected after a long vacation.

But in aiding him bear so easily his constant and heavy burdens, how well did his mental gifts second his physical powers! Quick, clear, and versatile in mind, not only did he adjust himself readily to different kinds of work, but he made

the change serve as rest and recreation. No time was lost in mistaking the accidental for the essential. What should be done, and what left undone, he seemed to know by instinct. No less dexterous was he in finding the surest, shortest way to do the thing desirable to be done. Not given to broad generalizations, his mind moved in straight lines toward a definite end. He indulged in no super-refinements of thought. The vague and abstract he disliked; and aided by his unusual power of comparison he sought to give all his conceptions substance, form, color.

With the philosophic side of the Greek mind he was not in sympathy, yet few men not of the Greek race have been more so in the æsthetic element. The Greek's love of the beautiful, his fine adaptation of means to ends, his nice sense of proportion and power of limitation for the sake of proportion, were all Professor Mather's. He had also much of the sprightliness, fertility, and acuteness of the Greek mind. Nor was he wholly without resemblance to the social side of the Greek. In his fresh and youthful spirit, his delicate sensitiveness, his ease and delight in conversation, his love of raillery and sportiveness of speech; and in that peculiarity of the Greek, as one of the ancients tells us, "to conceal nothing," he was kindred to the people whose words and works were the study of his life.

And yet, if he were in these characteristics a Greek, must we not say of him, as has been said of one of our most noted men of letters—that he was a Greek-Yankee? And what answer is there to the charge that Greek culture necessarily weakens practical force better than the memory of his life, one in spirit as it was with the art and literature of ancient Greece, and yet with an enterprise, a sagacity, an energy, an executive skill, that in the business world of to-day would have made him one of its kings?

But this practical efficiency was not merely an intellectual product. Moral traits and habits gave largely to its power. Not only did he know how to do things, but he did them as a man who saw in them a duty. Thus, he was prompt, industrious, faithful. Punctual to every appointment, he was also impatient at any delay in beginning a good work. "Why wait, why not now?" was his frequent question when any reform or improvement was suggested.

Of his industry no eulogy could be so eloquent as the simple statement of the work which he did. But a single example in one line of labor must suffice. His lectures on Sculpture comprise three closely written volumes, or 469 pages of large letter-paper size; those on Greek life, three volumes, or 351 pages; and those more

recently prepared in extending the course, two volumes, or 305 pages. To accompany these lectures he had carefully planned or collected illustrations, in the way of drawings and photographs, to a number that goes high into the hundreds. No mention is made of the time and effort given to the getting of funds and the gathering of the general Art Collection, nor of additional hours of instruction, and the large and constantly increasing correspondence from all parts of the country incited by the reputation of the department, other than to say that in itself it was one man's full measure of work.

As faithful as he was industrious, new occupations displaced no old and regular duty. Attention to Greek art, therefore, did not with him mean neglect of Greek literature. In the same period that the Art Gallery is growing under his hands, he is editing his selections of Herodotus, and Thucydides, and preparing his edition of Sophocles' Electra, and *Æschylus' "Prometheus Bound,"* —scholarly works now in wide and successful use. And so his full devotion to teaching never suffered by his success in preaching. From the student in Greek he expected a preparation of two hours for each exercise. The same time for preparation in some form he always exacted of himself. Do we not here discover one source

of that interest and stimulus, of which every alumnus writes who recalls his recitations?

This same spirit of faithfulness appeared in him as the college officer. A man peculiarly sensitive to any manifestation of dislike, to whom the good will of others was very dear, and who more than most teachers valued a student's affection; he was always willing to be responsible for an unpopular course of action when convinced that the best interests of the college so demanded.

He was faithful as a citizen. Not only was he deeply interested in whatever was for Amherst's prosperity and attractiveness, but how promptly and liberally he responded to calls for help outside of his own community. How he rode over these hills to give the best that he had in lecture or sermon, irrespective of the measure of compensation, often for none at all.

It was this same faithfulness that in the winter months of his illness, made him wish to hear at his house his class in Greek. Not to be able to meet this class was to him a sad disappointment. All larger plans for the future had been laid upon the altar. Now one hope remained,—the hope to teach to the end, or as he said, "to die in the harness." And, may we not add that his wish was granted. Not as his faithful spirit had planned, but as God willed.

For as the students waited, day by day, for a message from his sick room only to hear with each report, how the beloved teacher was translating his unspeakable trial and struggle into the might of the loyal, trustful spirit, a lesson was taught that the dullest nature among us could not fail to reverence. And as God shall call any of us, in days to come, to serve as we "stand and wait" in some great sorrow of soul or pain of body, what a rallying to manly obedience, to heroic endurance, will there be in the remembrance of his example.

A personal quality that especially distinguished Professor Mather was his naturalness. How this was a characteristic of his religious life, we have seen. It was the same in all relations. Open as the day in speech and action, he expressed the feelings of the moment. The thought as it came to him, you had without reserve. Man of the world as he was in many ways, he was at heart a child. Sagacious, practical he was also impulsive, demonstrative. This made his nature apparently complex, and not always understood. One with this characteristic may now and then seem inconsistent. To some it will also be thought to indicate lack of power; for the stream is so clear that the unpractised eye does not recognize its depth. Nor did this element in Professor Mather

permit him always to understand others, even some of his truest friends. A reticence of speech upon certain subjects, a silence about the deeper emotions which some sacredly observe, he could not always rightly interpret. Neither had he at all times the poise that marks natures less spontaneous. But how immeasurable would have been the loss had he sacrificed this quality; for to this he owed largely his brightness, freshness, ardor, enthusiasm. This made him socially so enjoyable. This enlivened his home with the spirit of banter and playfulness; and made his intercourse with his children so beautiful, resembling that of a brother more than that of a parent. This gave him the hearty appreciation and its frank expression, that caused all companions to remember him as a delightful traveller. So unconscious was he in his enthusiasm in recognizing places of classic interest, when approaching Greece on his last visit, that before he knew it he had drawn to him almost every English-speaking tourist on the boat. This it was that gave him easy contact with so many sides of life, and has left for him wherever he has been, even only for a day, some friend or admirer; for it was the one touch "that makes the whole world kin." But in his deeper life, as we have seen, it was far more than this. It was that "one touch of nature"

sanctified by the spirit of Him who said of the little child, "of such is the Kingdom of God."

The personal quality, however, that should most claim our attention was his unselfishness. Speaking of a man's unselfishness one may be easily misunderstood. Selfishness is so obtrusive as rarely to escape full recognition. Unselfishness is more like a river flowing underneath the surface, but here and there coming to the light for the cheer and invigoration of all around it. Broadly speaking, the two elements are found in every man. To say, therefore, whether a life is selfish or unselfish, is to say which element predominates. The review thus far made of Professor Mather's life, leaves no question on which side it is to be placed. But the full measure of his unselfishness, we may not so readily see. The relations in which it was revealed in all its sweetness and tenderness are too sacred for our theme. The home life where the first thought was always for every one else and never for himself, could tell us; but here we must not enter. Friendships rivaling brotherly affection, with natures so rare and fine that, like the spear of Ithuriel, they would at first touch have laid bare the meaner, baser life whose central thought is self, could tell us how unselfish was his spirit; but such voices are not for our ears to-day. The young men who have

made their way into life through his helpful influence, who have felt the clasp of his generous hand in time of pressing want, to whom if he gave a garment it was one as good as he would buy for himself, could tell us; but they would guard his memory as delicately as he met their need.

But it has been said that two periods of life uncover the inner nature, however cleverly the real life has been concealed before; one, extreme old age; the other, severe illness of long duration. And what a revelation of Professor Mather's spirit comes to us from such an illness, as it tells of him, sending out from that chamber his thought and interest wherever there was the least possible claim upon his sympathy; as eager to know the result of the last town-meeting as when in health, and with years of life apparently before him; keeping himself informed of everything that concerned the college; urging those dear to him not to exclude themselves from what was bright and pleasant outside the sick room; grateful for every attention from friends, and never forgetting in the most excruciating pain, the "thank you" for the slightest service of the attendant; and when conscious of the beginning of the end, putting aside all plans of life, and contenting himself with the remembrance, as he said, "of the things that he had tried to do that make for righteousness."

And yet this was only another revelation of the same unselfish spirit that had shown itself in all the years of his devotion to the college. Of this spirit can be mentioned no more signal proof than his generous estimate of his associates. No man serving the college as a means of personal ambition, and particularly a man of the open, impulsive nature of Professor Mather, could train himself to speak of the good work and personal qualities of his colleagues so warmly and so freely as did he whenever occasion permitted. How hearty was his admiration of the noble wisdom and rare power that guide this institution; how appreciative was he of the ripe and earnest scholarship that presides over the department of a sister language; how ready his recognition of the calm strength of another colleague, the warm heart and rich usefulness of another; and so on, leaving no quality, no effort, no sign of promise, that looked toward Amherst's advancement in any direction, without his enthusiastic commendation. Never jealous or envious, he rejoiced in every forward step taken by any other department. Indeed, the quickest way to his esteem was to do something helpful to the college. "The victory of Miltiades," perhaps "would not suffer him to sleep." But if the stimulus of another's activity bent him with a new energy to his work, it was not to

surpass an associate but to make his department worthier of the college.

Upon the quantity or quality of his work outside of his department, we need not dwell. What we would emphasize was the disinterestedness of his services. "Of Professor Mather's whole-souled devotion to the college," writes one, who not only knew his heart as an open book but had wide, practical knowledge of what he did, "it was his passion. Remember, most of his life was spent in Amherst, even a large part of his boyhood, either there or in its immediate vicinity. He grew up, familiar with the traditions of self-sacrificing lives given to the institution. He saw such lives lived every day. He drank in the spirit in the very air. The last time I was with Professor Mather for free and unrestrained converse, in September, 1889, he told me, that, next to his own family and kindred, his thought and love were for Amherst College. He was, even then, on an errand of business for the college, in the interests of a department not his own, and his alert mind was full of plans for advancing the scheme in hand. The Greek and the Art Department and his power to serve in outside ways, constituted his life's joy, and were enough for him." In words as unquestionable, the President and Treasurer of the college whom he consulted

in his various efforts, testify of the pure, disinterested spirit which always marked his labors. Said a prominent member of the Board of Trustees of another college, looking for a President, a few years ago: "In my opinion Professor Mather is the man who, in every way, is best qualified for the position. I know of but one objection. He so loves Amherst College that would he even consent to come to us, I am afraid his heart would not keep him company."

And yet can we speak more in his spirit than when we ask, what in turn was his debt to the college? If no greater blessing can come to a man than time and place to do noble things, then was Amherst College a blessing to Professor Mather. It took him out of himself, and made all that he could do, and all that he could become, a gain for larger interests than individual success. It was an open door to unselfish service. Again, it unified his life. Here all his activities found a common centre. It spurred him to the highest attainments, the richest culture, the noblest manhood; and then gave him the opportunity for consecrated use of all that he had struggled for and won. It took his many brilliant gifts that with a selfish aim would have gone out in darkness, like a whirl of sparks, and centred them all in that bright, unquenchable flame whose mission is, as its legend tells us, "to enlighten the lands."

We have now to speak of a characteristic that all may not recognize. Professor Mather was so energetic in spirit, so earnest and courageous in the advocacy of what he conceived to be right, that he was perhaps thought to have large confidence in himself. But not often did he look upon the results of his work with favor. Searching as was his eye for the defects of a student's performance, he was more exacting in judging the faults of his own. His aim was so high that he could not easily believe that he had reached the mark. Thus, he found the pleasant assurance of others grateful and helpful. In the pulpit so spontaneous and general was the response, that he felt here a confidence not habitual in the classroom. Nor is this ground for criticism. Had mere technical accuracy, or even large scholarship of visible measurement, been his object, it would not have been so difficult to assure him of the result. But when a teacher has for his aim what Professor Mather said had been his, "manhood, genuineness, breadth and variety of character, sweet and tender sympathies," he cannot well have the certainty of results that are measured by the percentage of examination papers.

A friend writes of him as "sanguinely earnest." Yes, he was sanguinely earnest, but it was in the motive of his work that his earnestness and hope

had their spring and force. Once, when evidently speaking from the depths of his heart, while forced to consider a call to another field of work, he said : " Could I believe it possible for me to do for these boys what I wish to do, my thoughts would not be turned from Amherst, for a moment; but I do not seem able to do it." Yet the next day, and every day as long as he taught, he was striving toward his goal as earnestly as though he had never questioned reaching it. Among the human compensations of his long illness were the touching assurances, that, in face of his doubts, he had done largely what he supremely wished to do. Here a letter from one now a power in the world, telling of what an inspiration this teacher had been to him; here another, recalling little kindnesses of more than a score of years ago ; here another, recognizing the moulding influence of the Greek class-room that had been felt all through life. What a ray of cheer, letters and words like these must have sent into the dark valley through which he was passing. It was as a promise of the full reward of the eternal day so soon to break upon his vision.

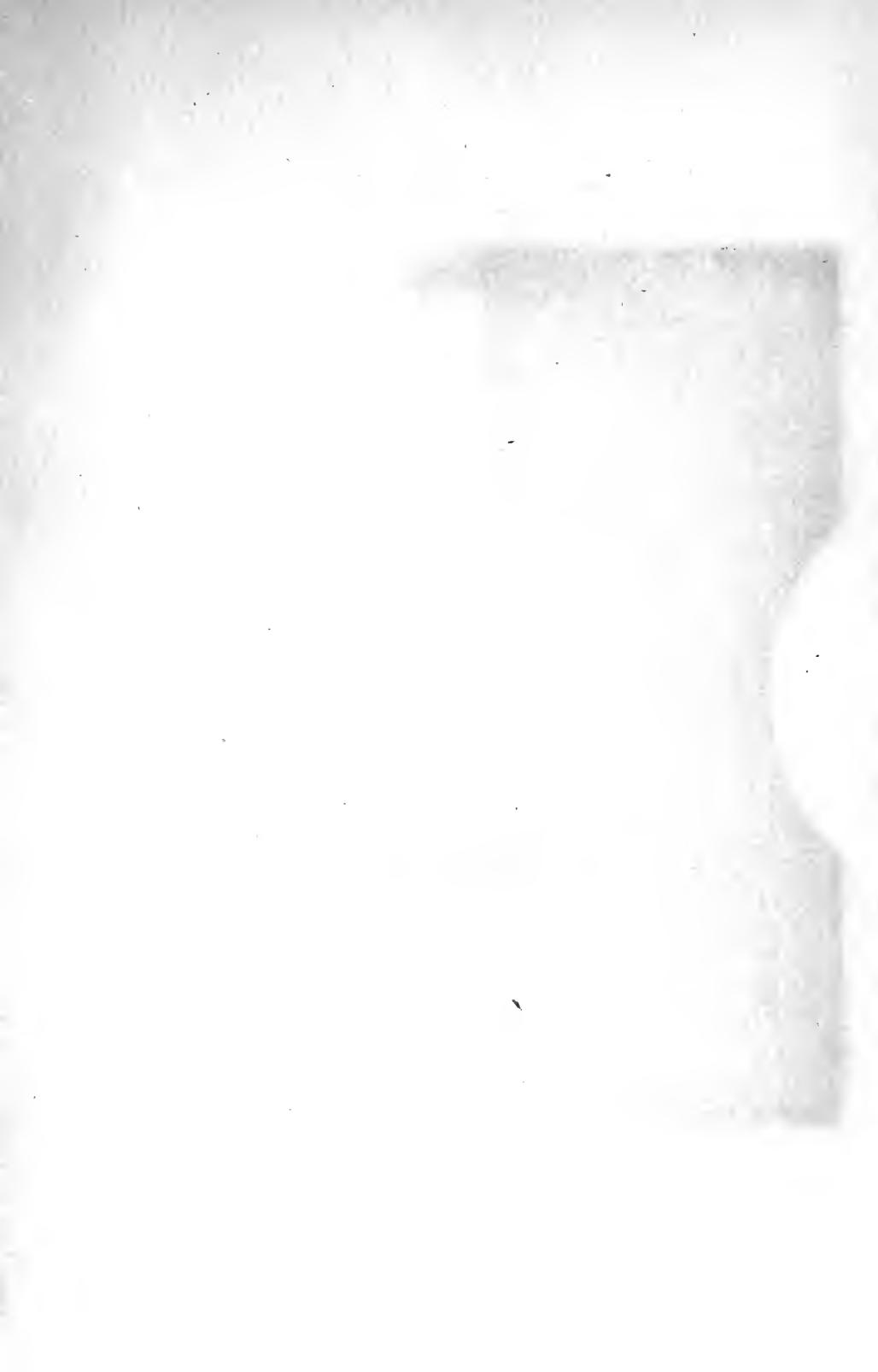
V

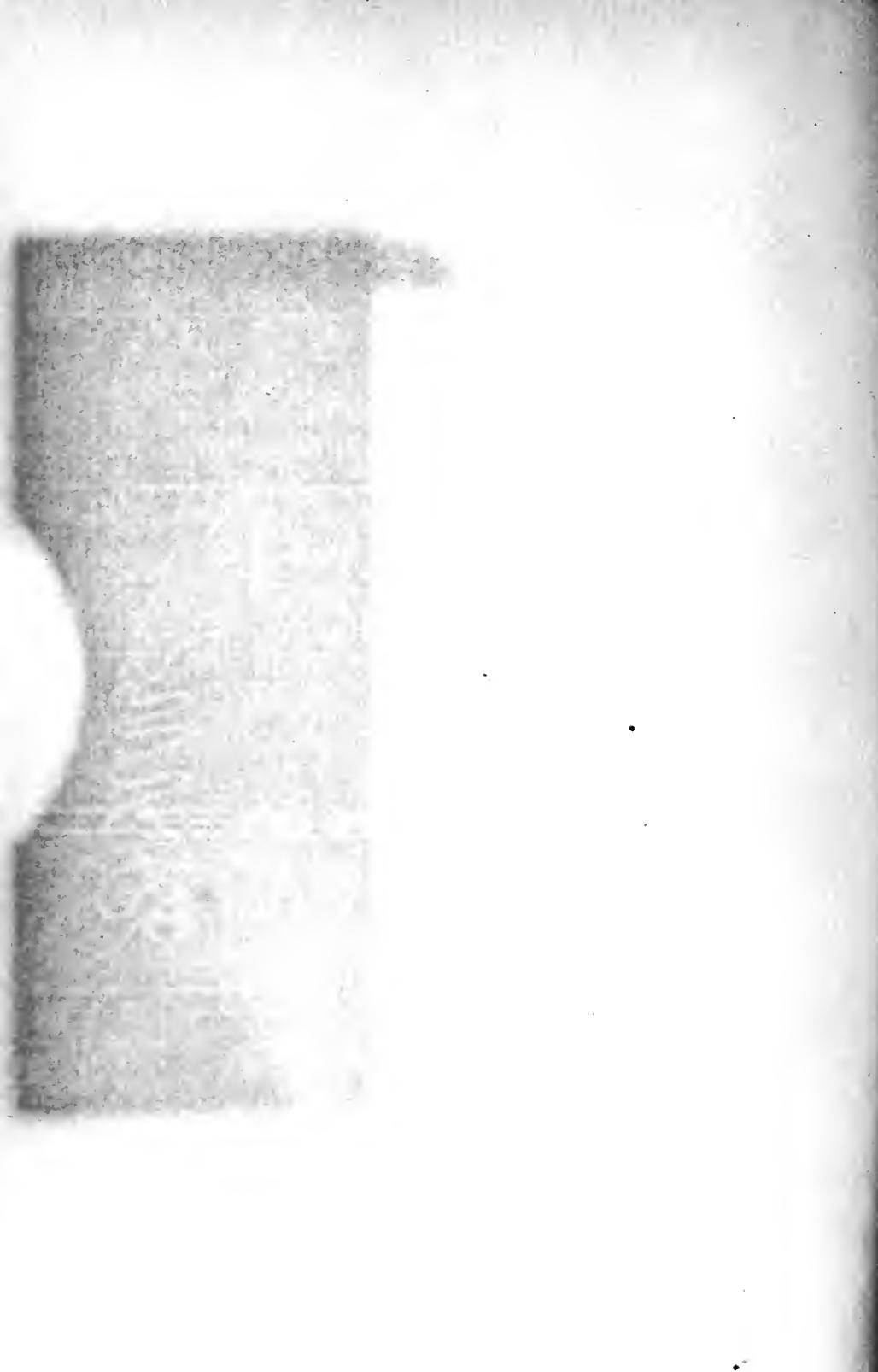
AND now, as we near the close of his life, the impression that it was a favored life deepens ! Favored it certainly was in its natural gifts of health and vigor; in a happy, enthusiastic temperament; in a mind brilliant and versatile; in fine and appreciative tastes, wide sympathies, and charm of social power; and best of all in an inherited moral force and religious spirit. Favored it also was in parentage, in the home of his childhood, in the wise hand and strong mind that shaped his youthful education; in the later training of Williston and Amherst, with opportunities for travel and foreign study; in finding his life-work in the glow and strength of early manhood ; in the stimulus which that life-work gave to every aptitude, to the beneficent use of his varied powers, and to the full enlistment of his heart in its service; in his extended circle of admiring acquaintance, and choicer group of devoted friends; in his beautiful home and those who

made it more than all the rest of the world to him; in his increasing usefulness and growing honors with every year. And, twelve months ago, as with ripened powers enriched through recent travel, study, and leisure, he was again laboring with us, what new and larger chapters telling of far more valuable work and wider range of activities, promised still to be added.

Yet because the sequel is not as we had planned for him, shall we say that the life was no longer favored? It is not for us to interpret the mysteries of God. Why these disappointments, why this summons to face for months with open eye the inevitable end, why now the call hence when never before so largely ready for consecrated service, is not for us to say. But neither is it for us to forget that the seeming blow which staggered us even as we only saw it fall upon him, was one to which he bowed as to a blessing. During his illness, he was often heard saying slowly and solemnly, "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am;" at times, adding the opening verses of the first Psalm. And as we think of the description of the godly man: "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he

doeth shall prosper," may we not imagine that could our friend speak to us, it would be to say, "pause not at twelve months ago, but write, mine was through the grace of God a favored life to the very end?" Surely we must so write, unless we thrust our own doubt and disappointment into the place of his resignation and faith. For with a spirit born of God, this patient sufferer took what were to us only blighted hopes, painful struggle, and weariness unutterable, and transformed them into jewels for his crown of glory. And so speaking in this same spirit in which for months he lived, he would now tell us, that the life that in its ending seemed to us like a broken pillar, an unroofed house, a ship going down in mid-sea, had in it no disaster, nothing of incompleteness, but an order, a meaning, a beauty, that were divinely perfect.





Educat. B
M

12397

Mather

Author Frink

Title Richard Henry Mather

NAME OF BORROWER.

DATE

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARY

Do not
remove
the card
from this
Pocket.

Acme Library Card Pocket
Under Pat. "Ref. Index File."
Made by LIBRARY BUREAU

